

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

December 2, 2004

Members Present: Jean Haggerty, Chair; Doris Holden, Treasurer; Elsie Fetterman; Susan Whitbourne, Barbara Sutherland, Al Byam, Frank Lattuca

Absent: Joan Keochakian; Hank Peirce

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Interim Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Program Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Director)

Others: Gerald Weiss (COA Liaison & Select Board Member), Marge Babb.

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 9:05 AM. Jean welcomed all members and guests. She then asked Marge Babb to talk about the Holiday Bazaar. Marge said that is being held on Friday, December 3rd. There are lots of crafts items, goodies and lunch will be served.

Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of October 14, 2004, were reviewed and accepted with one minor correction on page 4. Under "Other Business, the last sentence should read, "Self-neglect is now included in the definition of elder abuse."

SENIOR TRUST

Treasurer's Report:

Doris Holden reported that there was a slight increase in the Senior Trust investments. The balance in the checking account is \$3,722.20. The total assets are \$85,263.02. The Treasurer's Report was accepted as written.

STAFF REPORTS

CDBG Block Grant Requests:

Van Subsidies

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) have designated the Town of Amherst as a Mini-Entitlement Community for the purpose of receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Amherst is eligible to receive a minimum of \$200,000 and up to \$600,000 in block grant funds for housing and community development activities benefiting low and moderate income citizens.

The Senior Center has sent in a proposal for money for van subsidies for elders and younger disabled persons. This will continue to help seniors and younger disabled people with disabilities to purchase van passes at a discount. The CDBG request is for \$7,200. (\$4,700 which matches the \$3,200 from Florence Savings Bank last year and \$1,500 this year.) Also, a pre-requisite for requesting the CDBG van subsidy money is that Town Meeting must appropriate (as they did the previous year) \$12,000 to subsidize van tickets.

Maura explained that for many years Amherst's elders' benefited from the free public transportation system serving the area. In the spring of 2003, PVTa had to deal with cuts in state funding for FY '04 and after public hearings it was decided that there would be a fee to purchase passes to ride. The Dial-a-ride van tickets were \$2.00 each way. This was a sudden impact on elders and younger people with disabilities. This is when Town Meeting was asked to appropriate \$12,000 to help with the cost of the van tickets. Also, a local bank donated \$4,700 (2 years) to help to subsidize the van tickets. Books of tickets are sold to seniors and younger people with disabilities at a discounted rate of \$20.00 per book (20 tickets). This money is almost now depleted and Maura questioned how this group of people will deal with paying for van tickets if this discount is taken away. This is why the Senior Center will be applying for CDBG grant funds to again subsidize van tickets.

Gerald Weiss stated that the Amherst Select Board will be holding an informational meeting on Monday, December 20, 2004, at 7:00 PM in the Town Room to inform the community about the availability of funds and to seek input. Then sometime in January, Town Meeting will look at recommendations. There will be a lot of competition from the community for the money.

Half-time Outreach Worker

A half-time outreach worker is another request for CDBG grant money. One of the projects that is proposed is to begin with the oldest people in the community and make a visit with them to assess what services they are in need of and then hook them up to services if needed. The outreach worker would coordinate this program and work with nursing student volunteers and other volunteers.

Housing Rehab

Another proposal for CDBG grants funds would be funds for home repairs to assist elderly owners with limited incomes. Participants would be selected based on eligibility and priority need categories.

Bangs Renovations

With the CDBG grant deadline coming up quickly, there is no time for major Bangs Center renovations, but there are accessibility issues that can be addressed, some that are immediate safety problems:

- The entrance to the Senior Center is not wide enough especially for wheelchairs.
- The floor level at the Senior Center entrance changes.
- The layout of the office is not conducive to privacy or confidentiality.
- Maneuvering through the offices is difficult as there is no hallway.
- The kitchen in the large activity room is only a demonstration kitchen, not a commercial kitchen. It is not up to code (i.e. washing of hands and preparing of food in same sink).
- Dishwasher in kitchen when open blocks the pathway.
- There is no freezer space, no storage, general lack of space.

An architect will be needed to make recommendations to get ideas for some of these changes especially the kitchen area in the large activity room. There is some money in the maintenance department's budget to make some of the office changes and Nancy has been talking to Ned about these changes happening in the spring. Elsie Fetterman asked if there was a possibility that someone would do the architectural plans on a pro bono basis. And, Frank Latucca added that there are some kitchen supply companies that will do this sort of thing but the catch is you have to buy their equipment. Frank will look into this matter.

Consultant Update

Nancy told the members that there were three consultant groups that were interviewed for the Bangs Center reorganization. All three groups were rejected by the interview committees. It was decided that the RFP will be split into two sections. Mike Letcher, the former Assistant Town Manager to Barry DelCastilho, will be asked to do the first part of the RFP which is the assessment of where we are at today. The next part which is implementation of any changes could be hired out or done in-house.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Finance

Joan Keochakian was absent and not able to report on the establishment of the "Friends of the Senior Center".

Nancy and Maura had a meeting with Barry DelCastilho, John Musante, and Maria Racca, regarding the COA FY'06 budget requests. This meeting was mainly an informational meeting to explain the budget request and no decisions were made. Nancy advocated for a training line item to be added to the budget as there is not any money budgeted for conferences and workshops. Maura just went to a training on tax relief for elders and there are other conferences and trainings that would be beneficial to staff. Some other questions Barry asked were about Center Activities and Office Supplies.

One of Nancy's goals for the Senior Center is for all of the Senior Center Staff to be paid with Town money. One good thing that came out of the meeting was that John Clobridge gave an incorrect grant offset and this gave our budget more money than was realized. Barry is committed to Senior Center staffing and we hope that Marlene will be able to stay on as a permanent staff member. She has taken over some outreach which has been a great help to Maura. Nancy told the COA members that the staff is on "overload". There is no time to do new grants.

Susan Whitbourne asked that when grant opportunities come up is there some stock text that can be plugged in and used? Nancy said that it was getting easier because of good statistic keeping that the Senior Center has instituted. Elsie Fedderman stated that the University could help in grant writing. Nancy stated that this is all good but there is not enough staff to implement the projects even if we receive the grant. Susan stated that there are experienced people at the University who would be happy to be taken on an internship.

Nancy is concerned that the Senior Center must have a long-range plan. With all of the “baby boomers” coming of age and living longer we need to be thinking about how to serve their needs. There has been a 128% increase of elders in Amherst. We need a vision and a direction to focus on. Some of the ideas that Nancy has is an adult Day Health Program, an exercise room and gearing up for transportation needs. Nancy feels that the Senior Center needs to expand. We need more building space. The space here is not set up for all of the Senior Center activities. We need to be proactive and have a vision as to where we are going.

Jean Haggerty and Frank Lattuca both agreed that we need a plan. Jean stated that we also need a retreat to get started on planning. She suggested that this be put on the agenda for January. Al Byam questioned if the CDBG grant money could be used to expand the Bangs Center.

HVES

Barbara Sutherland reported on the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans Sexual Senior Training she attended on September 23rd in Northampton. She said that LGBT Seniors have issues and this training was to get together a task force to train around this issue. Assistance and support for these groups of people is needed. These people need to feel inclusion and not exclusion. There needs to be better understanding, more education and sensitivities of all the diversities.

Transportation

The van is being used regularly for smaller trips. HCAC, the Health Dept and the Senior Center collaborated so that Cambodian Elders could use the van to take a trip to Magic Butterfly Wings in Deerfield after having a lunch together with Cambodian food. UMass students of Cambodian culture ate and went on the trip with the elders also. Maura stated that this trip was a wonderful idea and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the adventure.

Nancy reported that all Travel Club trips with the van have been self-supporting.

There is a problem with the tent that is being set up at the North Fire Station for the van. The back wall does not fit. The back wall is 16 feet wide and the company sent a 12 foot wide back so it does not fit. Bill Klaus, Amherst Fire Department, who has helped to put up the tent, has called the vendor and they have stated that they will not take back the wrong tent part because it has been over 30 days. They will not send out the correct part without charging it to a credit card number. Nancy is going to contact the company to try to rectify the problem.

The battery charger for the van is set up and plugged in. Nancy thanked all that have been involved with the tent and the battery charger for their help.

NEW BUSINESS

A COA member is needed to serve on the 250th Anniversary Committee. Frank Lattuca is on the committee.

Gerald Weiss reported on the sidewalk construction project. A total of \$600,000 will be borrowed. It will be a three year project. Kellogg Avenue and most of So. Pleasant Street will be done along with repaving of the road.

Jean announced that there will be a training for people with disabilities who sometimes feel unsafe, unsupported and disrespected at the Bangs Community Center on Thursday, December 16th at 2:00 PM. Safe Passage, Stavros, Everywoman’s Center, the Freedom Center and NW District Attorneys office are partnering for this presentation.

Nancy announced that the Senior Center and the Amherst SALT Council are presenting “It’s Your Court-An Overview of the Probate & Family Court” on Thursday, December 9th at 6:30 PM at the Bangs Center.

The Senior Center is having a Holiday Bazaar on Friday, December 3rd, in the Large Activity Room from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM with the goal to raise enough money to buy new tablecloths for the lunchroom.

Nancy announced that the annual Thanksgiving Dinner had 75 attendees and 13 home delivered meals

Jean stated that there are growing foods needs and social service needs in the town. Maura stated that she handling many, many people and their needs are growing. She is seeing an increase in people with dire needs. Between phone calls and appointments she is handling as many as 400 people a month. There is an increase in

phone calls from people who are on the edge. Maura feels that this unfortunately will increase. There seem to be more difficult situations coming up. The services that are available are stretched even more than ever.

Next Meeting is January 13, 2005 at 9:00 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.